

# Japanese Cuisine



There are many views of what is fundamental to Japanese cuisine. Many think of *sushi* or the elegant stylized formal *kaiseki* meals that originated as part of the Japanese tea ceremony.

Traditional Japanese cuisine is dominated by white rice (*hakumai*), and few meals would be complete without it. Anything else served during a meal--fish, meat, vegetables, *tsuke-mono* (pickles)--is considered a side dish, known as *okazu*.

Traditional Japanese meals are named by the number of side dishes that accompany the rice and soup that are nearly always served. The simplest Japanese meal, for example, consists of *ichijū-issai* ("one soup, one side" or "one dish meal"). This means soup, rice, and one accompanying side dish--usually a pickled vegetable like *daikon*. A traditional Japanese breakfast, for example, usually consists of miso soup, rice, and a pickled vegetable. The most common meal, however, is called *ichijū-sansai* ("one soup, three sides"), or soup, rice, and three side dishes, each employing a different cooking technique. The three side dishes are usually raw fish (*sashimi*), a grilled dish, and a simmered (sometimes called boiled in translations from Japanese) dish -- although steamed, deep fried, vinegared, or dressed dishes may replace the grilled or simmered dishes. *Ichijū-sansai* often finishes with pickles such as *umeboshi* and green tea.

This Japanese view of a meal is reflected in the organization of traditional Japanese cookbooks. Chapters are organized according to cooking techniques: fried foods, steamed foods, and grilled foods, for example, and not according to particular ingredients (e.g., chicken or beef) as are western cookbooks. There may also be chapters devoted to soups, sushi, rice, noodles, and sweets.

Since Japan is an island nation, its people consume much seafood including fish, shellfish, octopus, squid, crab, lobster, shrimp and seaweed. Although not known as a meat eating country, very few Japanese consider themselves vegetarians. Beef and chicken are commonly eaten and have become part of everyday cuisine.

Noodles, originating from China, have become an essential part of Japanese cuisine. There are two traditional types of noodle, *soba* and *udon*. Made from buckwheat flour, *soba* (thin, brown noodles, made from wheat flour), *udon* (thick, white noodles). Both are generally served in a soy-flavored fish broth with various vegetables. A more recent import from China, dating to the early 19th century, is *ramen* (Chinese wheat noodles), which has become extremely popular. *Ramen* is served in a variety of soup stocks ranging from soy sauce/fish stock to butter/pork stock.

Although most Japanese eschew eating insects, there are a couple of exceptions. In some regions, grasshoppers (*inago*) and bee larvae (*hachinoko*) are not uncommon dishes. Salamander is eaten as well in places.

## **T**raditional Japanese table settings

The traditional Japanese table setting has varied considerably over the centuries, depending primarily on the type of table common during a given era. Before the 19th century, small individual box tables (*hakozen*) or flat floor trays were set before each diner. Larger low tables (*chabudai*) that accommodated entire families were becoming popular by the beginning of the 20th century, but these gave way to western style dining tables and chairs by the end of the 20th century.



Traditional table settings are based on the *ichijū-sansai* formula.

Typically, five separate bowls and plates are set before the diner.

Nearest the diner are the rice bowl on the left and the soup bowl on the right.

Behind these are three flat plates to hold the three side dishes, one to far back left (on which might be served a simmered dish), one at far back right (on which might be served a grilled dish), and one in the center of the tray (on which might be served boiled greens). Pickled vegetables are often served as well, and eaten at the end of the meal, but are not counted as part of three side dishes.

Chopsticks are generally placed at the very front of the tray near the diner with pointed ends facing left and supported by a chopstick holder, or *hashioki*.

## **D**ishes for special occasions

In Japanese tradition some dishes are strongly tied to a festival or event. Major such combinations include:

Osechi - New Year.

Chirashizushi (clear soup of crumbs and amazake) - Hinamatsuri.

Botamochi (sticky rice dumpling with sweet azuki paste) - Spring equinox.

Chimaki (steamed sweet rice cake) - Tango no Sekku and Gion Festival.

Hamo (a kind of fish) and somen - Gion Festival.

Sekihan (cooked rice with adzuki) - celebration in general.

Soba - New Year's Eve. This is called *toshi koshi soba* (literally "year crossing soba").

In some regions every 1st and 15th day of the month people eat a mixture of rice and adzuki (*azuki meshi*).

## **J**apanese ingredients

### **R**ice:

Short or medium grain white rice

Mochi rice - glutinous rice

### **V**egetables:

Nira - Chinese chives

Spinach

Cucumber

Eggplant

## - Vegetables Cont.-

Gobo - burdock plant

Daikon - (In Japanese. literally "large root"; Chinese: literally "white radish") is a mild-flavored East Asian giant white radish.

Sweet potato

Renkon - lotus root

Takenoko - bamboo shoots

Negi - Welsh onion

Fuki - butterbur

Moyashi - mung or soybean sprouts

Kaiware - radish sprouts

Sansai - wild vegetables

Konnyaku - shirataki

Tsukemono - pickled vegetables

## **Mushrooms:**

Shiitake

Matsutake

Enokitake

Nameko - plant

Shimeji

## **Seaweed:**

Nori

Konbu

Wakame

Hijiki

## **Processed seafood:**

Chikuwa - a Japanese tube-like food product made from ingredients like fish *surimi*, salt, sugar, starch, and egg white. After mixing them well, they are wrapped around a bamboo or metal stick and steamed or broiled.

Niboshi - Japanese dried baby sardines (sometimes translated as anchovies).

Dried cuttlefish

Kamaboko - a variety of Japanese processed seafood products, called *surimi*, in which various white fish are pureed, formed into distinctive loaves, and then steamed until fully cooked and firm in texture.

Surimi - ground meat" in Japanese. Refers to a product made from white-fleshed fish (such as pollock or hake) or lean meat that has been pulverized to a paste and attains a rubbery texture when cooked.

Satsuma

Noodles - udon, soba, somen, ramen

Eggs - chicken, quail

Meats - pork, beef, chicken, horse. Sometimes as *minchi* (minced meat)

Beans - soy, adzuki



## **Bean products:**

Edamame - soybean, is a species of legume, native to eastern Asia.

Miso - thick paste, made by fermenting soybeans with sea salt and *kōji*, itself the product of fermenting rice, barley or soybeans with a mold culture

Soy sauce - light, dark, *tamari*

Tofu - tofu, *agedōfu*

Yuba tofu skin - a Japanese and Chinese food product made from soybeans

## **Fruits:**

Persimmon

Chestnut

Nashi pear

Loquat

## **Citrus fruits:**

Daidai - an Asian variety of bitter orange.

Iyokan - a Japanese citrus fruit.

Kabosu

Kumquat

Mikan - general term for citrus

Natsumikan (*amanatsu*) - a yellowish orange citrus fruit

Sudachi - a small, round, green citrus fruit that is relatively unknown to the world except in Japan

Yuzu - a variety of Bitter Orange.

Katakuri flour, kudzu flour, rice powder, soba flour, wheat flour

Fu - wheat gluten

## **Japanese flavorings:**

It is not generally thought possible to make authentic Japanese food without *shō-yu* (soy sauce), *miso* and *dashi*.

Shō-yu (Soy sauce), dashi, mirin, sugar, rice vinegar, miso, sake.

Kombu, katsuobushi, niboshi. - are edible kelp widely eaten in Northeast Asia

Negi (welsh onion), onions, garlic, *nira* (garlic chives), *rakkyo* (a type of scallion)

Sesame seeds, sesame oil, sesame salt (gomashio), furikake, walnuts or peanuts to dress.

Wasabi (and imitation wasabi from horseradish), mustard, red pepper, ginger, *shiso* (or beefsteak) leaves, *sansho*, citrus peel, and honeywort (called *mitsuba*).

Monosodium Glutamate - for better or for worse, is often used by chefs and food companies as a flavor enhancer, as well as being available on the table as a condiment.

## **Famous Japanese foods and dishes**

### **Deep-Fried dishes (*Agemono*)**

Korokke (*croquette*) - breaded and deep-fried balls of mashed potato with creamy



## - Deep Fried Dishes Cont. -

vegetable, seafood, or meat-flavored fillings.

Kushiage - meat deep fried on a skewer.

Tempura - battered and deep-fried vegetables, seafood, and meat.

Tonkatsu - deep-fried breaded cutlet of pork (chicken versions called *chicken katsu*).

Donburi - a one-bowl dish of hot steamed rice with various savory toppings, usually includes cooking an egg as an ingredient.

Katsudon - deep-fried breaded cutlet of pork (*tonkatsudon*), chicken (*chicken katsudon*) or fish (*magurodon*)

Oyakodon (*Parent and Child*)- usually chicken and egg but sometimes salmon and salmon roe

Gyūdon - seasoned beef

Tendon - battered, deep fried foods, usually shrimp and vegetables.

Unatamadon - broiled eel with vegetables

## Grilled and pan-fried dishes (*Yakimono*)

Gyoza - Chinese dumplings (potstickers), usually filled with pork and vegetables

Hamachi Kama - grilled yellow tail tuna jaw and cheek bone

Kushiyaki - meat and vegetable kabobs

Okonomiyaki - pan-fried batter cakes with various savory toppings

Omu-Soba - an omelette with yakisoba as its filling

Takoyaki - a spherical, fried dumpling of batter with a piece of octopus inside

Teriyaki - grilled, broiled, or pan-fried meat, fish, chicken or vegetables glazed with a sweetened soy sauce

Unagi (including *kabayaki*) - grilled and flavored eel

Yakisoba - Japanese style fried noodles

Yakitori - chicken kebabs

Nabemono - one pot cooking

Motsunabe - cow intestine, hakusai (*bok choy*) and various vegetables are cooked in a light soup base

Nikujaga - a Japanese version of beef stew

Oden

Shabu-shabu - hot pot with thinly sliced beef, vegetables, and tofu boiled in a thin stock and dipped in a soy or sesame-based sauce before eating.

Sukiyaki - thinly sliced beef and vegetables cooked in a special sauce made of soy sauce, *dashi*, sugar, and *sake*. Participants cook at the table then dip food into their individual bowls of raw egg before eating it.

Tecchiri - hot pot with blowfish and vegetables, a specialty of Osaka



## Noodles (*men-rui*)

Noodles often take the place of rice in a meal. However, the Japanese appetite for rice is so strong that many restaurants even serve ramen-rice combination sets.

Soba - thin brown buckwheat noodles served chilled with various toppings or in hot broth

Ramen - thin light yellow noodle served in hot broth with various toppings; of Chinese origin, it is a popular and common item in Japan



Udon - thick wheat noodle served with various toppings or in a hot *shoyu* and *dashi* broth  
Champon - yellow noodles of medium thickness served with a great variety of seafood and vegetable toppings in a hot broth which originated in Nagasaki as a cheap food for students  
Somen  
Okinawa soba - a wheat-flour noodle often served with *sōki*, steamed pork

## **Other**

Agedashi tofu - cubes of deep-fried silken tofu served in hot broth  
Bento or Obento - combination meal served in a wooden box  
Hiyakko - cold tofu dish  
Osechi - traditional food eaten at the New Year  
Natto - fermented soybeans, stringy like melted cheese, infamous amongst non-Japanese for its strong smell and slippery texture. Often eaten for breakfast. Typically popular in Kanto and less so in Kansai  
Shiokara - salty fermented viscera  
Chawan mushi - meat (seafood and/or chicken) and vegetables boiled in egg custard



## **Rice (*gohanmono*)**

Mochi - soft rice cake  
Ochazuke - green tea poured over white rice, often flavored  
Onigiri - Japanese rice balls  
Sekihan - red rice with adzuki beans  
Kamameshi - rice topped with vegetables and chicken or seafood, then baked in an individual-sized pot  
Kare rice - Introduced from UK in the late 19th century, it became a staple food in Japan  
Hayashi rice - thick beef stew on rice; origin of the name is unknown, but may be "hashed rice"  
Om-rice (*Omu-raisu*) - omelette filled with fried rice, apparently originating from Tokyo

**Sashimi** - raw, thinly sliced foods served with a dipping sauce and simple garnishes; usually fish or shellfish but can be almost anything including beef, horse and chicken.

Basashi - sliced horse meat, sometimes called *Sakura*

Fugu - sliced poisonous pufferfish (sometimes lethal), a uniquely Japanese specialty

Rebasashi - usually liver of beef

Shikasashi - sliced deer meat, a rare delicacy in certain parts of Japan

## **Soups (*suimono* and *shirumono*)**

Tonjiru - similar to Miso soup, except that pork is added to the ingredients

Dangojiru - soup made with dumplings along with seaweed, tofu, lotus root, or any number of other vegetables and roots

Miso soup - soup made with *miso*, *dashi* and seasonal ingredients like fish, *kamaboko*, onions, clams, potato, etc.

Sumashijiru - a clear soup made with *dashi* and seafood

**Sushi** - is vinegared rice topped or mixed with various fresh ingredients, usually fish or seafood.

Nigirizushi - This is sushi with the ingredients on top of a block of rice.

Makizushi - Translated as "roll sushi," this is where rice and seafood or other ingredients are placed on a sheet of seaweed (nori) and rolled into a cylindrical shape on a bamboo mat and then cut into smaller pieces.

Temaki - Basically the same as makizushi, except that the nori is rolled into a cone-shape with the ingredients placed inside.

Chirashi - Translated as "scattered", chirashi involves fresh sea food, vegetables or other ingredients being placed on top of sushi rice in a bowl or dish.

## **Sweets**

### **Wagashi** - Japanese-style sweets

Amanatto - A Japanese confectionery, made of *azuki* beans or other beans boiled with sugar.

Anmitsu - a traditional Japanese dessert

Anpan - bread with sweet bean paste in the center

Dango - rice dumpling

Ginbouis a wagashi - Looks just like a dried persimmon, and can be made by filling *gyuuhi* (also spelled *gyūhi*, a soft form of *mochi*) with bean jam, then sprinkling white sugar over it.

Hanabiramochi - a Japanese sweetmeat (*wagashi*), usually eaten at the beginning of the year. The name "hanabiramochi" literally means "flower petal *mochi*". It is made by placing a flat red *mochi* (rice cake) on top of a white one, then folding into a semicircular shape and filling with sweetly flavored burdock and soybean jam.

Higashi - a type of *wagashi*, which literally is dry and contains very little moisture

Hoshigaki - Dried persimmon fruit

Imagawayaki - also known as '*Taikoyaki*'.

Kakigori - shaved ice with syrup topping

Kompeito - crystal sugar candy

Manju - sticky rice surrounding a sweet bean center

Matsunoyuki - a Japanese sweet made by sprinkling ground caramelo (foam candy) on to a dark green *gyuuhi* in the shape of a pine tree.

Melonpan - a large, round, sweet, crusty bread that looks and tastes somewhat like a melon

Mochi - steamed sweet rice pounded into a solid mass

Oshiruko - a warm, sweet red bean (an) soup with *mochi* (rice cake)

Uiro - a steamed cake made of rice flour

Taiyaki - a fried, fish-shaped cake, usually with a sweet filling such as red bean paste



### **Dagashi** - Old-fashioned Japanese-style sweets

Karumetou - Brown sugar cake. Also called *Karumeyaki*

*Ramune* - delicious soft drink, Marble soda

Sosu Senbei - Thin wafers eaten with soy sauce

Umaibou - Puffed corn food with various flavors

### **Yogashi** - Western-style sweets, but in Japan typically very light or spongy

Kasutera - "Castella" Iberian-style sponge cake

Mirucurepu - "mille crepe" - layered crepe

**Other Snacks:**

Azuki Ice - vanilla flavored ice cream with sweet azuki beans

Hello Panda - a somewhat popular brand of Japanese biscuits

Macha Ice (Green tea ice cream) - green tea flavored ice cream

Pocky - a biscuit stick coated with chocolate, strawberry

Chinmi - literally meaning odd taste, are local cuisines that have fallen out of popularity or those cuisines that are peculiar to a certain area.

Uni - specifically salt-pickled uni

Karasumi - salt-pickled sea urchin roe

Konowata - cured sea cucumber entrails

Compiled by Paula Scott, USU Extension, Salt Lake County

Source: Wikipedia

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